POLICY STATEMENT
All division-funded programs must follow established procedures for (1) selecting appropriate assessment instruments, (2) assessment training, (3) administering assessments, and (4) reporting assessment results.

PURPOSE
Proper assessment provides instructional staff with information on specific student educational needs. In addition, proper assessment administration ensures Pennsylvania’s success in meeting and exceeding the National Reporting System (NRS) target for measurable skill gain by students.

GUIDANCE: Appropriate Assessment Instruments
The following are the current division-approved standardized assessments for reporting individual student gains:

Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE): Forms 9 and 10 [print-based and/or computer-based (CBT) non-adaptive], Complete Battery or Survey Subtests: Reading, Language, and Total Math

General Assessment of Instructional Needs (GAIN): Forms A and B [print based and/or computer-based (CBT)], English and Math

Basic English Skills Test (BEST): BEST Literacy Forms B, C, and D

BEST Plus Oral English Proficiency Test: BEST Plus 2.0 Forms D, E, and F (print based) or Computer Adaptive Test (CAT)

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS): Print-based and/or computer-based (CBT) non-adaptive

Life Skills subtests:
Reading – 27, 28
Math – 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38

*Life and Work subtest:*
Reading – 27, 28, 81, 82, 81X, 82X, 83, 84, 85, 86, 185, 186, 187, 188
Listening – 981L, 982L, 983L, 984L, 985L, 986L

**Note:** Neither the GED Ready™ or HiSET® Official Practice Test nor the Official GED® Test or the HiSET® Exam are approved as standardized assessments for educational functioning level (EFL) placement.

### Selecting Assessments for Appropriate Student Populations
Programs should select the appropriate standardized assessment(s) for each student based on the characteristics of the student (including needs, abilities, EFL, and goals). Table 1 (refer to Tools section below) provides suggested approved standardized assessments for English as a Second Language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE)/Adult Secondary Education (ASE) student populations at each EFL. The division issues the following guidance to ensure that students are being tracked with the most appropriate approved standardized assessment:

**BEST Literacy:**
1. BEST Literacy is NRS-approved to place students in ESL EFLs.
2. The NRS has no exit criteria for Advanced ESL based on BEST Literacy, so students assessed with BEST Literacy that place into Advanced ESL cannot demonstrate completion of Advanced ESL. Therefore, BEST Literacy should not be used with Advanced ESL students. Students that place into High Intermediate ESL based on BEST Literacy should be transitioned to an assessment for higher-level ESL students (CASAS or BEST Plus). This may be done immediately or after a matching follow-up BEST Literacy has been given, at the program’s discretion.

**BEST Plus 2.0 (Basic English Skills Test Oral Skills Section):**
1. BEST Plus 2.0 is NRS-approved to place students in ESL EFLs. This assessment is scored through the Advanced ESL NRS Level.
2. Programs may use either the print form or the computer-assisted form, but they should not initially assess with a print form and give a second administration with the computer-assisted form, or vice versa.
3. Instructors must not administer the BEST Plus 2.0 to their own students.
4. A score from BEST Plus 2.0 cannot be matched with one from BEST Literacy.

**TABE:**
1. TABE is NRS-approved to place students in ABE/ASE EFLs.
2. It is not NRS-approved to place students in English as a Second Language (ESL) EFLs. Non-native speakers of English who are working on goals where progress related to instruction would be captured appropriately by TABE (e.g., preparing to take the HiSET®/GED® tests or improving academic English skills for advancement to postsecondary education) can be assessed with TABE.
3. Care should be taken to use appropriate levels of the test. Refer to Table 1 in the Tools section below.
4. A higher level posttest can be administered if the student showed extraordinary progress in class.
**GAIN:**
1. GAIN is NRS-approved to place students in ABE/ASE EFLs.
2. It is not approved to place students in ESL EFLs. Non-native speakers of English who are working on goals where progress related to instruction would be captured appropriately by GAIN (e.g., preparing to take the HiSET/GED® tests or improving academic English skills for advancement to postsecondary education) can be assessed with the GAIN.
3. GAIN does not include a locator or appraisal section, or leveled forms.

**CASAS:**
1. CASAS Math and Reading subtests are NRS-approved to place students in ABE/ASE EFLs.
2. CASAS Listening and Reading subtests are NRS-approved to place students in ESL EFLs.
3. Life Skills Reading or Life and Work Reading Forms, Forms 27 and 28, may be particularly appropriate assessments for the lowest level ABE students.

**Caution:** Programs may purchase informal “progress” assessments from test publishers (e.g. Wonderlic) but should not mistake these for state-approved assessments.

**Assessment Extensions:** The TABE, CASAS Life and Work Listening (980 series), BEST Plus 2.0, BEST Literacy, and GAIN assessments are approved for use through February 2, 2019.

**Special Needs Students:** Documented special needs students are not required to be tested with a division-approved assessment but must be assessed using an alternative assessment (See Policy D.120 Special Needs). Special Needs students will be assigned to the lowest EFL - Beginning Adult Basic Education (ABE) Literacy. Because these students are not given a division-approved assessment, they cannot achieve an EFL gain.

**GUIDANCE: Assessment Training**
To ensure sound assessment procedures and accurate data, all staff members who administer assessments must complete division-approved training through the professional development system (PDS) or the assessment publisher. Assessment staff must periodically repeat the courses to ensure compliance with test administration procedures. Only properly trained staff are permitted to administer assessments. Programs should ensure that they have the most up-to-date version of the test administration manual for the assessment(s) used and that staff read and follow the test administration procedures. Programs should regularly review appropriate test administration procedures.

**Training**
**TABE:** New staff members administering this assessment must take the PDS TABE initial training course as soon as possible. All TABE-trained staff must complete the TABE refresher course every three years.

**GAIN:** The GAIN must be administered by a Wonderlic Certified GAIN Test Administrator (GTA). On-line certification training is provided by Wonderlic. Certified GTAs must renew their Wonderlic Certificate of Registration for the GAIN every two years.

**CASAS:** New staff members administering this assessment must take the PDS CASAS initial training course before administering the CASAS assessments. All CASAS-trained staff must complete the CASAS refresher course every two years.
BEST Literacy: New staff members administering this assessment must take the PDS initial training course as soon as possible. All BEST Literacy-trained staff must take the course as a refresher every three years.

BEST Plus 2.0: Programs may use this assessment only upon completion of required training. Current BEST Plus administrators will not need to be retrained, but new test administrators must attend BEST Plus 2.0 training available through the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) or the PDS. To ensure accurate and valid scores, Best Plus 2.0 administrators must complete the annual scoring refresher course offered by the PDS.

GUIDANCE: Assessment Administration
All programs must have written assessment policy and procedures which ensure the following:
   a. criteria for determining the most appropriate standardized assessment(s) for each student;
   b. completion of required assessment training by test administration staff;
   c. first assessment administration procedures;
   d. use of appropriate accommodations as allowed by publisher guidelines;
   e. informal assessment of students’ other needs and goals; and
   f. second assessment administration (posttesting) procedures.

First Assessment Administration: All programs must have procedures in place to ensure that all students are given an initial approved assessment before beginning instruction. This includes the use of the appraisal or locator, when using the CASAS Life Skills, CASAS Life and Work, BEST Plus 2.0, and TABE 9 and 10 (Survey or Complete Battery Edition), to determine the correct level of the assessment to be administered. It is essential that students be assessed prior to receiving instruction to ensure that instructors have diagnostic information about the students’ educational needs.

Assessment Accommodations: Students with special needs of a sensory, orthopedic, cognitive, or psychiatric nature can be assessed using standardized instruments if the program feels they can show gains when given accommodations. To meet the unique needs of these adults, alternate approaches to standardized assessment practices may be appropriate and authorized. For example, TABE offers large print test books and audio tapes for the visually impaired. Refer to assessment publisher guidelines for more information.

Informal Assessments: The use of informal assessment is encouraged to enhance academic placement and planning. Informal assessments cannot be used as a substitute for the required standardized assessments. Results from informal assessments will not be entered into eData v2, will not count toward program performance standards, and should be kept in program records.

Note: Programs may use the GED Ready™ Official Practice Test or the HiSET® Official Practice Test as an informal assessment to ensure that students are prepared to take the respective high school equivalency tests. These tests cannot replace the approved standardized tests used for reporting purposes.

Second Assessment Administration (posttest): Programs must have procedures in place to ensure that all students have a minimum of two administrations of at least one assessment with different but equivalent forms of the same instrument. Pairing two different instruments (e.g., a TABE reading and a TABE math or a CASAS Reading and a GAIN English) cannot be used to determine educational gain. TABE, CASAS, and GAIN approved computer-based (non-
adaptive) tests (CBT) are identical to their paper-based versions. It is permissible to pretest with a paper-based test and posttest with the correct alternate form of the computer-based test and vice versa. Students that persist in their instruction should be assessed multiple times during a program year, as appropriate.

**Recommended Timeframes:** Publishers of the approved standardized assessments have recommended timeframes for follow-up administrations. Programs must provide administration of the assessments in accordance with the timeframes recommended by the respective publishers. Refer to **Table 2** in the Tools section below.

Programs have the option of posttesting outside the recommended timeframes under certain reasonable circumstances. For example, a student that is being released from prison or anticipates an extended leave of absence may be posttested before the recommended timeframe if the student has enough hours to have a reasonable chance to achieve an educational level gain.

Another example is a student who was assessed with the TABE and placed at NRS level 4 (High Intermediate ABE) who has 55 hours of instruction, exits with no posttest, and returns after an absence of 90 days. In this case, the program does not have to posttest the student within five hours of his returning to the program. It is best practice to allow the student some additional instruction time before attempting a posttest and place a note to that effect in the student file.

**Note:** Programs that assess a student outside a test publisher’s recommended timeframe must document the reason in the student file.

**Periods of Participation:** Regardless of the number of periods of participation for a student, the programs should adhere to the test publisher's recommended posttesting timeframes.

**Expired Assessments:** During a program year, if a student does not receive instruction for 150 days or more, prior assessments are no longer valid, and the student must be reassessed. For TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus 2.0, the locator/appraisal tool must be administered to determine the testing level. Programs must use the alternate level form booklet from the one used during the last assessment administration.

**GUIDANCE: Reporting Assessment Results**

**Reporting Assessment Results:** Each program must have written procedures that ensure sound collection and reporting of standardized assessment data. These procedures should have steps where the assessment is:
- administered according to published guidelines;
- scored correctly;
- recorded completely and accurately by assessor; and
- entered accurately into e-Data v2.

**Entering Assessments:** Programs must enter all subject area assessments administered to a student into the e-Data v2 system. Even if an assessment score is not the lowest educational level to determine measurable skill gain for the student, the program can still use the posttest results to determine the effectiveness of instruction for that subject area.
An exception to this requirement is for students who are assessed in multiple subject areas but want to focus their instruction on a single content area (e.g., reading) that is not associated with the lowest EFL. In this example, the assessment for the subject area the student is working on is the only assessment entered into e-Data v2. A note explaining the reason must be included in the student’s file.

**Rollover Assessments:** Students continuing with the program into the next program year or served by another program in a previous year must have their adult record rolled over in the eData v2 system. As part of the adult record, the assessment for these students may be rolled over if appropriate for the student’s course of study in the new program year. The rollover assessments must be dated within 150 days of the student’s first period of participation enrollment date to appear on the rollover screen.

**Determining Educational Gain:** The e-Data v2 system allows entry of multiple administrations of multiple assessments. However, per NRS and Division of Adult Education policy, eData v2 will automatically select the lowest EFL first administration subtest as the student entry level. Scores entered in e-Data v2 for follow-up administrations will determine an exit level for students. The difference between entry level and exit level will determine educational gain, defined as completion of an EFL. The EFL gain result for the lowest first administration will be used for NRS reporting purposes. [EFL Score Ranges](#)
### Table 1: Selection of appropriate assessment instruments (X) for ESL and ABE/ASE student populations at different NRS functioning levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate NRS EFL</th>
<th>Beginning ABE Literacy/Beginning Basic Education</th>
<th>Low Intermediate Basic Education/High Intermediate Basic Education</th>
<th>Low Adult Secondary Education/High Adult Secondary Education</th>
<th>Beginning ESL Literacy/Low Beginning ESL/Low Intermediate ESL</th>
<th>High Intermediate ESL/Advanced ESL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEST Literacy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEST Plus 2.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral English Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASAS Life Skills System</td>
<td>X Reading, Math</td>
<td>X Reading, Math</td>
<td>X Reading</td>
<td>X Reading</td>
<td>X Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASAS Life and Work</td>
<td>X Reading</td>
<td>X Reading</td>
<td>X Reading</td>
<td>X Reading, Listening</td>
<td>X Reading, Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAIN</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABE 9&amp;10 Survey or Complete Battery Edition</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Publishers’ Recommended Timeframes for Posttesting

**Note:** These recommended timeframes are considered the ideal; however, programs may need to adjust these timeframes to meet student needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approved Assessments</th>
<th>Recommended Timeframes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEST Literacy</td>
<td>60 hours minimum; 80-100 hours recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEST Plus 2.0</td>
<td>60 hours is recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASAS Life Skills System</td>
<td>40 hours minimum; 70-100 hours recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASAS Life and Work</td>
<td>50-60 hours of instruction is recommended when testing with an alternate form (i.e., 9M to 10M) for students with a minimum of 40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAIN</td>
<td>50-60 hours of instruction is recommended when testing with an alternate form (i.e., 9M to 10M) for students with a minimum of 40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABE 9 &amp; 10 Alternate Form NRS Levels 1-4 (ABE)</td>
<td>30-59 hours of instruction is recommended when testing with an alternate form (i.e., 9M to 10M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>